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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER OUTLINES INITIAL PRIORITIES AND
TRAVEL SCHEDULE

11. (SBU) Sri Lanka's new Foreign Minister Rohita Bogollagama convoked diplomatic heads of mission on February 6 to outline his initial priorities and travel plans. Noting his prior experience as Minister of Industries, then Minister of Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion, Bogollagama said he already had cordial relations with most of the diplomatic corps and wished to be accessible to all Ambassadors. He said President Rajapaksa now enjoys a wider consensus of support as a result of the recent cabinet changes. He stressed that the President remains committed to a negotiated settlement and to establishing Sri Lanka as a responsible and democratic nation. He told the heads of mission that he had spoken with Minister Tissa Vitharana that morning and that the minister had informed him that he expects a devolution proposal to be ready six weeks from now, after which it will go to the All-Party Conference for consideration.

12. (SBU) The Minister informed the diplomatic corps that he had already visited India and Germany during his first days in office. (NOTE: The visit to Germany had been previously scheduled by former Foreign Minister Samaraweera; Bogollagama chose to keep that scheduled visit.) Bogollagama said he plans to travel to the Maldives on a state visit with President Rajapaksa on February 11, then to Pakistan, China (again on a State Visit with the President), Iran in early March, the US, UK, Italy and France.

13. (SBU) COMMENT: It is noteworthy that the Minister will be visiting Pakistan, Iran and China so early in his tenure, while he did not even mention possible visits to Norway, Japan or Brussels. Pakistan, Iran and China increasingly are emerging as partners for Sri Lanka willing to provide assistance, including offensive weaponry, with no strings attached or questions asked.

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